

Chairman Michael Powell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

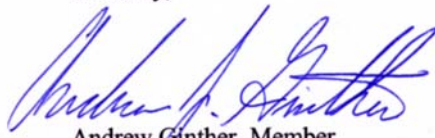
As a member of the Columbus Board of Education, I am constantly reminded of the battle to bridge the digital divide for our students. Although Columbus Public Schools is the second largest urban school district in Ohio, any way that we can help increase high-speed Internet access for students in rural or urban areas should be one of our top priorities.

A pending merger of EchoStar and Hughes announced on October 28, 2001, will provide significant, tangible benefits to consumers and most importantly children in Ohio's rural areas. The merger will allow EchoStar to provide meaningful competition with cable and telephone companies as a virtual third line into the home for a bundle of video/data/Internet services.

Competitively priced, high-speed Internet access via satellite will particularly benefit those in rural areas, especially businesses and schools that do not have access to cable modem service or DSL. The merger will also help bridge the digital divide without the need for government loans that are currently being requested by various cable and telephony providers.

Ensuring equal opportunity for all of our students must remain our country's top priority in today's changing economic world. Students need to have skills that will make them marketable and successful. A key component for quality 21st century education will be having access to and taking advantage of opportunities that the Internet provides. I hope you will join local leaders across the country in supporting the EchoStar/Hughes merger to help bridge the digital divide between urban and rural residents.

Sincerely,



Andrew Ginther, Member
Columbus Board of Education